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MEMORANDUM FOR

Lt. Col. STONE, Medical Section,  
NATOUSA

Oct. 29, 1943.

From Fred L. SOPER  
Representative Rockefeller Health Commission  
in North Africa  
Civil Affairs Section.

Subject : Demonstration of use of Louse Powder at  
Prison camps at Oran and Casablanca.

The Health Commission group consisting of Drs. W.A. Davis, F.S. Markham, L.A. Riehl and myself, in the company of Major M. Furcalow, USPHS, NAEB, arrived in Oran on Oct. 17th as planned. Contact was established with the Surgeon's office and arrangements made for an initial visit the same day to P.O.W. camp 131 at Mangin. The officer in charge reported that the prisoners in some of the older stockades were relatively clean but that stockade # 11 was known to be lousy. Preliminary investigation confirmed this statement and arrangements were made to begin louse counts the following day to determine the degree of prepowdering infestation.

On Oct. 18th, Lt. J.P. Stallworth, NAC and 12 enlisted men (colored) were on hand for training in louse counts. These men showed great interest in their work and some of them became quite adept. All had an adequate opportunity to search for and identify the various stages of the life cycle of the louse.

During the day the clothing of 252 men was examined. One or more lice were found on 193 (77 %) and 10 or more lice were found on 75 (30 %) men.

On Oct. 19th, the application of powder in stockade 11 began. In addition to Lt. Stallworth and his 12 men, Capt. Heaton and Sieg of the Sanitary Corps were on hand with additional men. The work in Stockade 11 could easily have been finished in one day, had more of the Dobbins dusters been available. (Dusters used 15). As it was the work carried over to the morning of Oct. 20th.

The prisoners were powdered at their tents, all extra clothing and bedding being powdered at the same time. Note was made of absent men sleeping in each tent and these were dusted later. The prisoners were anxious to be powdered and were most helpful in handling clothing and blankets and even in operating the dusting machines.

Stockade # 11 had some 1500 men when visited on Oct. 17th but this number had been reduced to about 1100 by the withdrawal of labor units on the 18th and 19th. Since these withdrawals were irregularly distributed among the tents, it is impossible to know exactly how many men were dusted but it is believed that the number was between 1300 and 1400.

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A list of the 282 prisoners examined in Stockade # 11 was left at the camp and the request made that none of these men be removed previous to re-examination planned for the 4th and 5th of November. It was also requested that no new lots of prisoners be added to Stockade # 11 previous to re-examination.

It is a pleasure to record the full collaboration given by the Surgeon's and Provost Marshall's offices in Oran. Col. Hutter was very interested in the work and Lt. Col. Cocke was most active in making all detailed arrangements necessary. Lt. Custer worked right with us at the Camp. Among those who saw what was done were Col. Hutter, Lt. Col. Cocke, Major Flynn, Col. V.H. Hornell, Lt. Col. Mason and Major Riser, Capt. Feldman (MC) and Capt. Rainwater were most helpful at the camp itself.

On Oct. 20th, F.L. Soper proceeded to Casa, Dr. Markham and Major Furcalow arriving on the following day. Contact was made with the Surgeon's office and arrangements made to visit P.O.W. Camp 101 at Berechid on the 21st. This visit was made in the company of Col. Parsons, of the Provost Marshall Service. Preliminary inspection showed P.O.W. Camp 101 to be relatively free of lice. Rapid examination of several enlisted men (POWs) failed to reveal lice but two of six or seven officers were found infested. Arrangements were made to begin work the following day with 10 men from the Camp company and ten men from hospital units (2 men each from 5 units).

On Oct. 22nd, the clothing of 141 of the 282 Italian officers in Section 4 of Camp 101 were examined under the supervision of F.L. Soper, F.S. Markham, Major Furcalow. Such infestations as were found were light and it was difficult to get the men doing the work to show the same interest in their work as did those working at Camp 131. One or more lice were found on 37 (26 %) of the 141 men examined. All of these infestations were light, none running beyond 15 lice. This is probably due to the fact that this group of officers had been deloused with methyl bromide 5 days previously.

All but one of the 282 officers in Section 4 were powdered together with their additional clothing and blankets on the 22nd and the morning of the 23rd.

As a check on conditions in Section 4, work was done in Section 8 on the 23rd. Section 8 contains some 1600 enlisted POWs who are grouped in Labor companies of about 144 men each. These men have been in camp several months, have been deloused with Methyl Bromide, have a dequate supplies of soap and water and are reputedly free of lice. Examination of the clothing of 182 men by the relatively untrained men doing the work revealed one or more lice on 11 (6 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> %) of them. These infestations were all light none running over 15 lice.

Due to the light infestation present, the decision was taken to powder 3 companies, companies A, B and C of the 1st Port Battalion, Eng. Detachment, of 144 men each. All clothing, whether in use or not, was powdered but blankets and bedding were not powdered.

Splendid collaboration was received from both the Surgeon's and Provost Marshall's sections at Casablanca. Col. Burnet and Col. Haller personally viewed the work and took an interest in making all necessary arrangements. Majors Zuker, Hoffman and Snyder were most helpful in handling details and Capt. Bramwell accompanied the first day's work at the camp. Lt. Hill in charge of processing at camp 101 was most helpful in making local arrangements.

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In the work at Camps 131 and 101 the Dobbins Superbilt Duster was used. Since the delivery tube of this duster is inflexible, it was sawed in two at the middle, which makes it easier to manipulate. When the louse powder is dry, this duster works satisfactorily but when the powder is moist, it tends to clog both at the outlet from the powder chamber and at the nozzle itself. Definite observations have not been made but it has been suggested that the louse powder is "wetter" at low temperatures than it is at high temperatures. Some workers prefer using the straight open tube without the nozzle, others preferring the nozzle.

The Dobbins duster can probably be improved by enlarging the holes leading from the powder chamber to the delivery tube and fitting it with a flexible delivery tube

The supply of Dobbins dusters in this theater seems to be uncertain. At Oran none were found on the stock lists but 13 were retrieved from an open box of dusters returned after usage. An identical experience was had at Casablanca where 13 used dusters were found in an open box.

In the absence of an adequate supply of dusters, it is suggested that these be used for dusting persons and the clothing they wear and that cylindrical cans with holes punched around the circumference near the base be used for dusting blankets and extra clothing.

The amount of powder used was in excess of preliminary estimates. At Camp 131, 280 pounds of powder were used on the clothing and bedding of between 1300 and 1400 men. At camp 101, 110 pounds of powder were used on the clothing and bedding of 282 officers and on the clothing (not including bedding) of 432 men. From these figures it is apparent that complete application to clothing and bedding requires about  $1/5$  of a pound per person. (We were greatly surprised at the amount of clothing and the number of blankets in the possession of the Italian prisoners). Apparently they made a point of being taken with all their equipment).

It was found that the application of powder to bedding and additional clothing required a great deal more labor and time than does the dusting of the individual with the clothing he wears. Considering the duration of activity of the louse powder, further observations are needed to determine the practicability of dusting only the clothing in constant use at the season of the year when treatment is given.

Attention should be called to the importance of light infestations such as that in section 8 at camp 101 at this season of the year. With the onset of cooler weather, much more clothing is going to be constantly worn and less bathing and washing of clothing indulged in. Both the percentage of individuals infested and the degree of infestation may be expected to increase.

